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Report of the High level Committee on South-South Cooperation

**Twentieth session
(1–4 June 2021)**

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Note

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Chapter I

Decisions adopted by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation at its twentieth session

1. The High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation adopted the following decisions at its twentieth session:

Decision 20/1 South-South cooperation

The High-level Committee,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution [33/134](#) of 19 December 1978, in which the Assembly endorsed the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries,¹

Reaffirming also the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Nairobi from 1 to 3 December 2009, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [64/222](#) of 21 December 2009,²

Reaffirming further the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Buenos Aires from 20 to 22 March 2019, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [73/291](#) of 15 April 2019,³

Recalling its decision 19/1, as well as General Assembly resolution [75/234](#) of 21 December 2020,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, and its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also General Assembly resolution [69/313](#) of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions and reaffirms the strong global commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling

¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, Buenos Aires, 30 August–12 September 1978* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.78.II.A.11 and corrigendum), chap. I.

² General Assembly resolution [64/222](#), annex.

³ General Assembly resolution [73/291](#), annex.

environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Reaffirming further the Paris Agreement,⁴ and encouraging all its parties to fully implement the Agreement, and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change⁵ that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible,

Reaffirming that South-South cooperation is an important element of international cooperation for development as a complement to, not a substitute for, North-South cooperation, and recognizing its increased importance, different history and particularities, stressing that South-South cooperation should be seen as an expression of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South, based on their shared experiences and objectives, and reiterating that it should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit,

Reaffirming also the increased contributions of South-South cooperation to poverty eradication and sustainable development, encouraging developing countries to voluntarily step up their efforts to strengthen South-South cooperation and to further improve its development effectiveness in accordance with the provisions of the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, and committing to further strengthen triangular cooperation as a means of bringing relevant experience and expertise to bear in development cooperation,

Recalling that triangular cooperation complements and adds value to South-South cooperation by enabling requesting developing countries to source and access more, and a broader range of, resources, expertise and capacities, that they identify as needed in order to achieve their national development goals and internationally agreed sustainable development goals,

Noting with great concern the threat to human health, safety and well-being caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the severe disruption to societies and economies and the devastating impact on lives and livelihoods, and that the poorest and most vulnerable are the hardest hit by the pandemic, reaffirming the ambition to get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by designing sustainable and inclusive recovery strategies to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to help to reduce the risk of future shocks, and recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic requires a global response based on unity, solidarity and renewed multilateral cooperation,

Further noting that the COVID-19 crisis has laid bare systemic weaknesses and exacerbated our world's vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries, accentuated systemic challenges and risks and threatens to halt or obliterate progress made in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by all countries, especially developing countries, including countries in special situations and countries facing specific challenges,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in implementing decision 19/1 of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, with emphasis on enhancing the role and impact of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, and in implementing the Buenos Aires outcome

⁴ Adopted under the UNFCCC in [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21.

⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation,⁶

Taking note also of the report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme on the review of progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the new directions strategy for South-South cooperation and the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation,⁷

Taking note further of the measures taken in the implementation of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation, the progress made by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation on efforts to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the Office, and the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic,

1. *Stresses* that the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation is a key intergovernmental body in the United Nations system for reviewing and assessing global and system-wide progress on and support for South-South and triangular cooperation;

2. *Also stresses* that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation;

3. *Reaffirms* the mandate and the central role of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation as the focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation for development on a global and United Nations system-wide basis, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General to present, during the twenty-first session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, further information on the specific assignments and duties to be taken up by the Director of the Office deriving from his designation as the Envoy of the Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation, taking into consideration the requests made by Member States to improve the impact as well as strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of the Office under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme, including in the areas of financial, human and budgetary resources;

4. *Stresses* the need for improving the transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, and acknowledges the steps taken by the Office in this regard;

5. *Notes with appreciation* the establishment of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation and its role in encouraging joint support to South-South and triangular initiatives and sharing information on development activities and results achieved by various organizations through their respective business models in support of South-South and triangular cooperation;

6. *Recognizes* that some United Nations entities and agencies have stepped up their support to South-South initiatives, including in policy coordination, capacity development, research and analysis, networking, partnership-building and funding, and requests all funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system that have not already done so to integrate South-South and triangular

⁶ SSC/20/2.

⁷ SSC/20/1.

cooperation into their policies and strategic frameworks, as appropriate and consistent with their respective mandates;

7. *Also recognizes* the need to enhance the effectiveness of South-South and triangular cooperation by continuing to increase their respective mutual accountability and transparency, in accordance with national development plans and priorities, further recognizes that the impact of South-South cooperation should be assessed with a view to improving, as appropriate, its quality in a results-oriented manner, and in this regard encourages relevant partners to further enhance development effectiveness of both modalities and to assess their impact, taking into account, as applicable, the provisions of the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;⁸

8. *Invites* the United Nations development system to encourage the transfer of technologies on mutually agreed terms for the benefit of developing countries to address poverty eradication and sustainable development;

9. *Notes* that, within the context of the broader reforms of the United Nations development system, the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation has the potential to enhance the role and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation through galvanizing the expertise of many United Nations organizations to support South-South and triangular cooperation;

10. *Reiterates* that the entities of the United Nations development system should enhance their support to South-South and triangular cooperation, at the request and with the ownership and leadership of developing countries, through a system-wide approach, bearing in mind their respective mandates and comparative advantages;

11. *Stresses* that the increased global interdependence resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic requires urgent and strengthened solidarity and international cooperation, including through South-South and triangular cooperation;

12. *Calls upon* Member States, other partners and donors to urgently support funding and close the funding gap for the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and its mechanisms, such as the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and support equitable distribution of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, and further explore innovative financing mechanisms aimed at ensuring continuity and strengthening of essential health services;

13. *Encourages* development partners and other relevant stakeholders to consider further increasing their support to developing countries through United Nations mechanisms, including the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, the Secretary-General's United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund in order to assist developing countries in controlling the spread and limiting the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic;

14. *Urges* Member States to enable global equitable, affordable and timely access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and health-care services, including as supported through the COVAX Facility and other relevant initiatives, especially in low- and middle-income countries, accelerating the global recovery and contributing to putting an end to the pandemic;

15. *Welcomes* the networks and exchanges between Southern institutions in developing countries, and requests the United Nations Office for South-South

⁸ General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

Cooperation, in close collaboration with Member States, to further foster dialogue and collaboration with and among such institutions, building upon the work undertaken at the regional, interregional and global levels with a view to advancing South-South and triangular cooperation to address pressing development challenges, including those emerging due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to report on the outcome in the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation;

16. *Also welcomes* innovations that enhance and expand South-South and triangular cooperation, and in this regard recognizes the importance of reinforcing partnership-building, including engaging with partners in government, civil society, academia and the private sector, and of resource mobilization, including contributions to the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, third-party cost-sharing, parallel financing, in-kind contributions and special fund management arrangements such as those of the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund and the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation;

17. *Recognizes* the need to mobilize adequate resources for enhancing South-South and triangular cooperation, and in this context invites all countries in a position to do so to contribute, in support of such cooperation, to the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation and to the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [57/263](#) of 20 December 2002, and to support other initiatives for all developing countries, including technology transfers among developing countries;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on progress made in implementing the present decision, including the recommendations and proposals made in his report, to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation at its twenty-first session, in 2023;

19. *Requests* the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme to provide an update of the support to interregional initiatives, and progress made by the Programme and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation for the promotion and facilitation of South-South and triangular cooperation in his report to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation at its twenty-first session.

Decision 20/2

Provisional agenda of the twenty-first session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation

The High-level Committee,

Taking into account the views expressed at its twentieth session,

Approves the following provisional agenda for its twenty-first session, to be held in 2023:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Review of progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the new directions strategy for South-South cooperation, the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

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3. Consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of decision 20/1 of the High-level Committee.
 4. Consideration of the report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme for the twenty-first session of the High-level Committee.
 5. Thematic discussion.¹
 6. Adoption of the report of the Working Group.
 7. Approval of the provisional agenda of the twenty-second session of the High-level Committee.
 8. Other matters.
 9. Adoption of the report of the High-level Committee on its twenty-first session.

¹ Theme to be decided on the basis of consultations to be undertaken with Member States by the Bureau of the High-level Committee.

Chapter II

High-level plenary segment

A. Opening of the session

2. At its 1st meeting, on 1 June 2021, the President of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, María del Carmen Squeff (Argentina), elected at the organizational meeting held on 11 May 2021, made a statement.

3. At the same meeting, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) made a statement.

B. Introduction of reports on implementation

4. At its 1st and 2nd meetings, on 1 June, and at its 3rd meeting, on 2 June, the Committee considered items 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 of its agenda.

5. At the 1st meeting, the Director a.i. of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation introduced the following documents:

(a) Report of the Administrator of UNDP on the review of progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the new directions strategy for South-South cooperation and the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation ([SSC/20/1](#));

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in implementing decision 19/1 of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, with emphasis on enhancing the role and impact of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, and in implementing the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation ([SSC/20/2](#)).

C. Discussion

6. The discussion, which took place virtually and included one Prime Minister and more government officials speaking from capital cities around the world than before, highlighted the increased significance of South-South cooperation due to the heightened need for solidarity, multilateralism, partnerships and regional cooperation in the face of devastating global crises such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and climate change. Some delegations saw the twentieth session of the Committee as a critical milestone and an opportunity to take stock of the progress in and support for South-South and triangular cooperation since their endorsement of the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. Others saw the session as an opportunity to highlight the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation for the pandemic response and recovery. One group of countries said that the session provided an opportunity for developing countries to consider arrangements for sharing their successful policies and experiences in controlling the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating the social and economic impact of the pandemic.

7. Many delegations expressed the view that the principle of solidarity that underpinned South-South cooperation had yielded many benefits for developing countries during the pandemic. One delegation recalled that, after existing forms of North-South cooperation had left developing countries to fend for themselves, solidarity had inspired its country to assist 150 fellow developing countries by

donating medicines, medical equipment and related supplies. With regard to vaccine distribution, its Government had reached out to the most vulnerable countries in the spirit of South-South cooperation. Several delegations recounted that they had responded similarly, while others expressed gratitude for the assistance received through South-South cooperation within and across regions.

8. One delegation, highlighting the commitment of its country to health and life through medical cooperation, had dispatched 56 medical brigades to 40 countries in 2020 and 2021. The country was also developing five candidate vaccines against COVID-19 for the benefit of its population and those of other countries, and the delegation expressed the hope to have vaccinated 70 per cent of its population by the end of August 2021. Another delegation called for greater sharing of good practices, knowledge and technical expertise through South-South and triangular cooperation because of the urgent need for enhanced North-South as well as South-South and triangular cooperation to ensure equitable and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines in order to contain the pandemic. The delegation observed that cooperation should be based on the principle that “no one is safe until everyone is safe”.

9. Expressions of renewed commitment to South-South cooperation were a common theme during the discussion, along with the articulation of new priorities for such cooperation amid current crises. One delegation stated that, with the help of the United Nations and the international community, developing countries had the will and commitment to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related Sustainable Development Goals. As many developing countries had not existed when multilateral organizations had been established, cooperation among developing countries offered them the opportunity to voice their concerns so that the international system could work better for such participants. The delegation said that, beyond the pandemic, there were other systemic issues to address, including the improvement of access to development finance on concessional terms and a fairer assessment of country vulnerabilities, in particular those of the small island developing States. Another delegation viewed South-South cooperation as a means of reforming the international order.

10. Delegations emphasized that the pandemic had reversed years of development progress, causing tremendous human suffering worldwide while generating one of the worst economic and social crises faced by the world. Despite the challenges, many delegations maintained that the pandemic also presented the opportunity to rethink and overhaul existing models of global cooperation in order for the world to build more just and inclusive economies. One delegation underscored the need for collective political determination, solidarity and cooperation to fight the global health crisis and its multiple ramifications. To do so, the countries of the South would need to improve the scale, scope, quality and effectiveness of their cooperation.

11. One delegation stated that the pandemic was the latest evidence that current challenges could not be resolved singlehandedly and that independent efforts were insufficient not only to achieve sustainable development but also to ensure peace, health and human well-being. The delegation stressed respect for international law, multilateralism, partnerships and solidarity between countries as a solution to ensure a better future, leaving no one behind. Another delegation posited that, to recover from the pandemic, it was essential to strengthen multilateralism, cooperation and international solidarity. Doing so would require the declaration of COVID-19 vaccines as a common good of humanity and the provision of the financial resources to ensure equitable access and distribution to all peoples of the world while creating capacities to guarantee their production and distribution in developing countries. In that connection, one delegation announced its support for intellectual property rights exemptions for the vaccines.

12. With regard to the recovery from the pandemic, one delegation said that it was necessary to prioritize global humanitarian action against the effects of COVID-19 and to guarantee global access to health, food and human security. That approach would require the optimization of the mechanisms for the exchange of information, knowledge and successful experiences in addition to promoting the transfer of technology, research and innovation to stimulate sustainable economic, social and environmental recovery.

13. Many delegations, in underscoring their renewed commitment to multilateralism, noted that the global crises, including the pandemic and climate change, could not be resolved by countries working in isolation. One delegation referred to Nicolae Titulescu, a twentieth-century diplomat twice elected President of the General Assembly of the League of Nations, who had said that “hardship creates the true brotherhood of nations”. The delegation therefore advised that, at the present time of hardship, only through full solidarity among countries would the world defeat the pandemic globally and achieve the Goals. Numerous delegations emphasized the need for stronger multilateralism in addressing new challenges that required international cooperation, which had become more relevant to the implementation of the recommendations of the Buenos Aires outcome document. Such multilateralism would rely on the voluntary, participatory and demand-oriented nature of South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as on its role as a vehicle to strengthen capacities, reduce asymmetries and promote sustainable and inclusive development while building public policies for mutual benefit.

14. Meeting the objectives of the 2030 Agenda was another key reason given by delegations to support South-South and triangular cooperation. One delegation said that the 2030 Agenda had established clear goals that could not be met within the agreed time frame if the world failed to cooperate and transform the current models of development to include environmental protection, among other factors. Another delegation expressed the conviction that international cooperation, and in particular South-South and triangular cooperation, must play a strategic role in the current scenario to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, following the road map of the Buenos Aires outcome document. One delegation added that South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation, enabled countries to gain access to technological resources, knowledge and training in solidarity while respecting sovereignty, national development plans, and social and economic policies, without any conditionalities.

15. Among the concerns expressed, one delegation observed that the efforts of developing countries to recover from the pandemic and implement the 2030 Agenda, especially in the fight to eradicate poverty, were hampered by the imposition of unilateral coercive measures, which directly affected South-South cooperation and, during a pandemic, hindered universal access to vaccines and treatments developed to tackle COVID-19 under equitable and affordable conditions.

16. Echoing the need for collective self-reliance advocated in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, one delegation called for more investment in health care, as well as cooperation among developing countries and organizations to work towards the development of more vaccines, and for more equitable distribution, specifically in Africa.

17. One delegation said that South-South cooperation was a valuable complement to North-South cooperation in the global efforts to achieve sustainable development and that it also had a pivotal role to play in the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of other internationally agreed development goals. Another delegation stated that the impact of the pandemic was the most serious and

complex challenge facing countries and observed that its economic and social effects increased inequalities and development gaps at the global level, in addition to posing a real threat to progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

18. A number of delegations called upon developed countries to fulfil their official development assistance commitments in support of efforts of developing countries to address the pandemic and implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Echoing the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, some delegations reiterated that South-South solidarity should not be used as a justification for developed countries to neglect the fulfilment of their commitments on official development assistance as well as on technology transfer and capacity-building.

19. With reference to the Nairobi outcome document, some delegations emphasized the need to base cooperation among countries of the South on the principles of respect for State sovereignty; national ownership; equality; and non-interference in internal affairs. Emphasizing that South-South cooperation was not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation, most delegates reaffirmed their commitments to previous agreements such as the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, the Nairobi outcome document and the Buenos Aires outcome document as a means to achieve sustainable development and the Goals.

20. While reiterating the need for coherent and coordinated United Nations support for their South-South initiatives, a number of delegations expressed strong support for the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and its role in promoting policy dialogues, building capacities, sharing knowledge, managing trust funds and organizing the complex virtual meetings during the twentieth session of the Committee. A group of countries commended the Office for its crucial role in building networks and increasing awareness of South-South and triangular cooperation across the United Nations system. In addition to affirming the mandate of the Office, delegations commended the Office for leading the formulation of the system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, and one delegation called upon the Office to support the efforts of developing countries in strengthening the institutional framework, coordination and promotion of South-South and triangular cooperation at the global and regional levels, including the efforts of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in the mobilization of financial and other resources.

21. Many delegations emphasized the role of the United Nations development system in advancing South-South and triangular cooperation and expressed appreciation for the system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development. Delegations widely agreed that the United Nations needed to play a critical role in advancing South-South cooperation because multilateralism was the only way to address shared challenges and that global solidarity and multilateralism were needed to ensure resilience, recovery and the opportunity to build back greener and better.

22. One delegation noted the importance of continuing to strengthen national, subnational and international institutions by enhancing learning between peers, exchanging knowledge and good practices and transferring technology under mutually agreed terms. In the face of the pandemic and other crises, the world needed innovative and flexible approaches that would allow a timely response, increased support from multilateral and financial institutions and regional and international organizations, and better positioning of the United Nations institutions to advance South-South and triangular cooperation.

23. Several delegations shared the view that triangular cooperation significantly supplemented South-South cooperation and contributed to enabling developing countries to achieve sustainable development through efficient partnerships. One delegation stated that, because the pandemic had increased social and economic inequalities between States and individuals, it was necessary when addressing that situation to deepen modalities such as triangular cooperation, which facilitated the broadening of exchanges of good practices based on the technical and financial contributions of a third partner. Similarly, another delegate viewed the twentieth session of the Committee as an opportunity to highlight the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation in responding to the pandemic.

24. One delegation mentioned an annual training programme organized since 2008 on post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction as an example of its country's involvement in triangular cooperation. In 2019, the programme had been conducted in another country and region for the first time, at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, and had benefited from the participation of experts from many African countries as well as African Union officials.

25. While numerous delegations emphasized the traditional role of South-South and triangular cooperation in developing capacity through the sharing of knowledge and best practices, many noted current priority areas that had been revealed by the pandemic, including health, education, food insecurity and connectivity. Many delegations highlighted a greater need to access digital technologies and broadband connection in order to enhance the impact of South-South and triangular cooperation while increasing the speed of recovery following the pandemic. Some delegations noted that digital technologies had enabled partners to respond to challenges and deepen cooperation while expanding the scope of South-South and triangular cooperation, with ambitious agendas reaching a larger number of institutions and people.

26. One group of countries recognized the significant contribution of South-South cooperation to trade and the ability of such cooperation to promote sustainable development in the global South. In that regard, the group called upon relevant international organizations to contribute more to support developing countries in fostering regional, subregional and interregional economic integration and cooperation arrangements. One delegation welcomed the recommendation by the Administrator of UNDP that developing countries should foster institutional linkages, with the support of relevant United Nations entities and the private sector, in order to improve access to quality education in science, technology and innovation with a view to reducing inequalities. The delegation noted that, through education, the world could fight back on poverty, inequalities and underdevelopment while improving the lives of future generations, given that the capacity of young people to become the next generation of development actors was of critical importance to the global South.

27. The preservation of the environment was also highlighted as a priority of some countries for South-South cooperation, with emphasis on measures such as the establishment of joint plans for the restoration of forests and degraded lands and the transfer of green and innovative technologies to manage natural resources sustainably. With regard to climate mitigation and natural disasters, one delegation reported that its country had trained more than 5,000 professionals from Latin America through triangular cooperation.

28. One delegation observed that, at the regional and global levels, South-South cooperation had created a degree of interdependence as well as new conditions and innovative mechanisms for strengthening the development of public policies that enabled countries to face shared development challenges and interests in a

coordinated manner. South-South cooperation was also viewed as a driver of regional stability, increased commerce, investment, and peaceful international relations.

29. One delegation urged the international community to increase investment in public health considerably in order to avoid large-scale health emergencies, such as the pandemic, in the future. Another delegation commended innovative initiatives for South-South regional health cooperation, such as those of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, to which it had made a voluntary contribution in 2020 to support its health response in developing countries, which would start with those countries most affected by the crisis. One delegation said that it was necessary to prioritize global humanitarian action against the effects of the pandemic and guarantee global access to health, food and human security.

30. Several delegations called for the replacement of per capita income as a measure of vulnerability and well-being with more holistic measures, such as the multidimensional vulnerability index or the human development index, that identify vulnerabilities beyond income, in particular in the light of the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. Some delegations noted the importance of South-South cooperation, especially for middle-income countries, whose advancement would help all other countries, as well as address their need to escape the middle-income trap.

31. A delegation highlighted the programmatic approach of one country that had positioned itself as a provider and recipient of technical cooperation and had seen a significant increase in South-South cooperation actions in recent years, from 8 projects in 2010 to 78 bilateral projects in 2019. In 33 of the projects, the country was a provider of cooperation, and in 10 both a provider and a recipient. The initiatives had been carried out mainly with countries in one region, with the clear intent to reach other regions of the world as well. Another delegation indicated that the country had continued its development project activities through virtual channels to strengthen national capacities despite the global health emergency and the closure of international borders.

Chapter III

Thematic discussion: “Accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through the effective implementation of the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation while responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and similar global crises”

32. The Committee considered agenda item 6 at its 4th meeting, on 2 June.
33. The President of the Committee, María del Carmen Squeff (Argentina), opened and chaired the thematic discussion.
34. The Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, who served as the moderator, introduced the five panel members.¹
35. The thematic discussion focused on the strategies, approaches and mechanisms of South-South and triangular cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, subregional, regional and global levels while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises. Specifically, delegations highlighted the way in which South-South and triangular cooperation was helping to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, and the role played by the United Nations system.

First presentation

36. The presenter of the theme “South-South cooperation and sharing of experiences on graduation among least developed countries: Bangladesh experience” stated that the challenges posed by the pandemic had given rise to new forms and expressions of solidarity. The importance of South-South cooperation as an effective form of development cooperation had been increasing. In the past year, challenges had arisen that had shown the critical need for South-South cooperation. For example, developing countries had received only 0.3 per cent of COVID-19 vaccines even though the majority of the global population lived in those countries. It was clear that the North-South model of cooperation was weakening because of the reluctance of some Northern countries to play their part; for example, only six developed countries had fulfilled their commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of gross national income to developing countries.
37. South-South cooperation provided developing countries with the resources to advance and improve their quality of life. The presenter cited Bangladesh as an example of the degree to which South-South cooperation was beneficial in helping developing countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the related Goals. By implementing South-South cooperation solutions and leveraging triangular cooperation, Bangladesh had been able to lift a significant portion of its population out of extreme poverty by investing heavily in people, building a human-centred modern democracy and increasing access to information.
38. Although Bangladesh had made significant progress in reaching its goals, the country still faced many challenges. It was incredibly vulnerable with regard to climate change and was currently hosting 1.1 million Rohingya refugees. Although Bangladesh was facing big challenges and would continue to face challenges in the future, South-South cooperation approaches and programmes would help the country to plan ahead and create effective and innovative solutions.

¹ The views expressed by the panellists are not necessarily those of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

39. The presenter urged developed countries to accelerate technology transfer to the global South. Developing countries, however, also required stronger collaboration and partnership among themselves to close the technology gap in countries of the South. The global South also needed to have a more central role in international economic decision-making. Triangular support should be aimed at building capacity in countries of the South for economic and social advancement and environmental sustainability. The reformed United Nations development system should carry out more activities to support South-South and triangular cooperation while taking into account national leadership, national ownership and the specific needs of the countries. As a means to strengthen cooperation for the achievement of the Goals, the global community should work together for people, planet and prosperity.

40. The presenter concluded with the following suggestions for South-South and triangular cooperation:

- (a) Exchange experiences, knowledge and development solutions among institutions of Southern countries, professional civil society, academia and the private sector;
- (b) Emphasize areas in which the global South needed to look for joint investments;
- (c) Build a mechanism to generate solid financial strength in order to support partnerships, where required, in the form of a common bank;
- (d) Create stronger triangular cooperation initiatives, which were needed and in which developing countries would invest or share best practices, with financial and technical support from countries of the global North;
- (e) Maximize efforts to gain global visibility and international recognition for the hard work of the global South;
- (f) Enhance funding for more independent operation of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in helping countries of the South with seed money for South-South cooperation projects;
- (g) Most importantly, establish a forum for finance and development and for foreign ministers of developing countries to discuss, decide and explore critical issues and strengthen weaknesses that meets at least once annually, preferably during the high-level event of the General Assembly. The Office should immediately take proactive measures in that regard.

Second presentation

41. Focusing on the topic “Maximizing the impact of regional and international South-South and triangular cooperation in line with the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation”, the presenter explained that South-South cooperation was a cooperative modality for regional and subregional cooperation that had evolved into a global mechanism for development. Furthermore, the Buenos Aires outcome document provided a set of policy guidelines to help achieve the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the related Goals. As a guide for those efforts, the outcome document placed specific emphasis on sharing knowledge, experiences and best practices. Given that South-South and triangular cooperation created the conditions for effective multi-stakeholder engagement among actors in the private and public sectors as well as those in academia and civil society, the international community had recognized its real-world benefits and advantages. Through increased South-South cooperation, traditional donors stood to learn innovative solutions from the countries of the South and gain a better understanding of the needs of developing countries.

Third presentation

42. The third presentation, on the theme “Leveraging South-South cooperation for sustainable development: leaving no one behind”, highlighted the historic commitment of Latin America and the Caribbean to South-South and triangular cooperation with innovative criteria of solidarity. The presenter shared the experience of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which analysed the potential of international development cooperation, including South-South, North-South and multilateral cooperation, from the perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean.

43. The presenter highlighted the solid network of cooperation agencies in the region that had provided a great boost to South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives in areas such as the exchange of doctors and health capacities, the sharing of statistics, and industrial development.

44. Alternative multidimensional measures that addressed structural vulnerabilities of middle-income countries linked to productivity, technological innovation, taxation, and environmental and social gaps were being explored in the region, and the presenter emphasized the urgent need to address tax evasion and support countries exposed to extreme natural events, among other pressing needs. The Commission was preparing a report on the challenges of developing countries in transition and proposals to ensure that the international community adopted a multidimensional approach and that graduation processes were suspended until further notice. The presenter also shared the challenges to South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation on implementing the 2030 Agenda that had been revealed during the pandemic, including the unequal access to vaccines that demonstrated the asymmetries between developed and developing countries.

Fourth presentation

45. The presenter of the theme “Challenges in the global South: leveraging South-South and triangular cooperation to ensure equitable and inclusive access to affordable vaccines and therapeutics” indicated that the pandemic had affected all countries but that the adverse effects of the disease were felt most acutely by the poorest and most vulnerable, the majority of whom lived in the global South. With low vaccination rates in the developing world, the World Health Assembly had called for a global effort to vaccinate at least 10 per cent of the population of every country by the end of September 2021. Priority must be given to health-care workers and at-risk populations in middle- and low-income countries; otherwise, variants would remain a global threat, and the pandemic would not end until transmission was controlled in every country. The current scenario had revealed that middle- and low-income countries could not rely solely on the importing of vaccines and other medical technologies. In order to address that issue, the Assembly had adopted a resolution on strengthening the local production of medicines and medical technologies. More importantly, South-South and North-South cooperation could be leveraged to push for the voluntary sharing of licences, technologies and know-how in order to end the pandemic and build a healthier, safer and fairer future for all.

Fifth presentation

46. In the fifth presentation, entitled “Mechanisms to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships in addressing crises through South-South and triangular cooperation”, some of the lessons learned from the pandemic were highlighted, including the critical role of the State in responding to crises, particularly the importance of its capacities, institutions, systems and associated infrastructure. The presenter also underscored the importance of capable public health systems that were an effective ecosystem across

society, rather than systems that could respond only vertically to specific diseases. Social trust and the social contract were two essential elements in crisis, and they were relevant when discussing the strengthening of multi-stakeholder partnerships, which required trust if they were to be effective. The pandemic had also held up a mirror to society's deep fault lines – of inequality, gender discrimination and vulnerable populations – the brunt of which was borne by the highly informalized economies that characterized much of the developing South. Furthermore, technology and digitalization had become the new determinants of who were the haves and who the have-nots.

47. The presenter stressed that, notwithstanding the challenges posed by the pandemic, the efforts made around the world to address it were often multi-stakeholder in nature: the State worked with the subnational authorities, the private sector, community-based and faith-based organizations and the scientific and research communities, each bringing its unique analytical and practical perspectives to the problem and the solution. The manner in which knowledge in the South was introduced into global debates, agendas and outcomes was more important than ever, and there was a need to build local capacities and recognize the role of Southern think tanks and related actors that were engaging more dynamically in global policy dialogues. Such actors included the South-South Global Thinkers initiative, which brought together Southern think tank networks and private sector entities to become a multiplier facilitating knowledge-sharing across regions; the Policy Bridge Tank, an initiative of the African Union Development Agency aimed at mobilizing African think tanks systematically in support of the successful implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want; and the T20 Africa Standing Group, which encompassed think tanks from African and Group of 20 countries to mobilize greater research and dialogue on critical global economic governance issues. In the context of the pandemic, all of the platforms had been able to bring multiple stakeholders together for dialogue or to collaborate on research ideas that were crucial to tackling the pandemic, which re-emphasized the interdependence of governments, business, civil society and the knowledge sector.

General discussion

48. In the general discussion that followed, delegations reiterated the extent to which South-South and triangular cooperation had been relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic and would continue to be so as countries worked to recover.

49. One presenter said that the global community should use the pandemic to build a greener, more sustainable economy. The current challenges required action, but it was important to remember that one size did not fit all when looking for solutions. South-South cooperation offered the opportunity to match the technical operations of individual countries of the global South with financial support. It was knowledge exchange and cooperation that would build resilience.

50. The presenter from Bangladesh was asked how the country had been able to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into its policy work and how, as a leader in e-commerce, it was sharing its knowledge and experience. He replied that South-South cooperation was critical for the future aspirations of developing countries. Bangladesh did not negate the importance of North-South cooperation; rather, it viewed it as complementary in enhancing South-South cooperation. Since 2007, the socioeconomic conditions of Bangladesh had improved drastically: gross domestic product had increased, the country had been successful in strengthening women's empowerment and education, and it would soon graduate to middle-income-country status. Digital Bangladesh, a project launched by the Prime Minister, had played a catalytic role in that graduation. In 2007, Bangladesh had had less than 10

digital services; it currently had more than 900 digital services for its citizens, of whom 1.6 million had mobile devices. With regard to knowledge-sharing, Bangladesh had agreed to host a South-South knowledge and innovation centre in Dhaka and would work with the Office to make it a reality.

51. One delegation described how it would endeavour to participate in South-South and triangular cooperation to assist with the long-term structural challenges to be overcome in recovering from the pandemic.

52. There was a need to increase the scope and scale of innovative solutions, and triangular cooperation was important in that regard. The World Health Organization had mainstreamed South-South cooperation into its policies and programmes to strengthen and enhance organizations that were working to scale up the innovative solutions. There were many activities around the world in which the health sector had benefited from South-South and triangular cooperation, including improvements in maternal and child health in Haiti and maternal health in the Dominican Republic, and improvements in road safety in the Dominican Republic achieved by learning from the experiences of Costa Rica. Noteworthy examples during the pandemic included the strengthening of public health laboratories through the provision of equipment, training and testing in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean region. To ensure equal access to vaccines, however, production would need to be improved globally, which would involve improving capacity-building and regulatory and technological support.

53. With COVID-19 still present, there was an enormous need to strengthen local manufacturing capacities for tests, vaccines and equipment. Countries needed to think more broadly about common goods for which investments and collaboration were needed across countries and sectors, in particular to see improvements in a post-COVID-19 world. There was also a need to continue to share good practices across regions and countries, as well as a need to do more to build back better, making cities resilient, rethinking urban development and seeing how South-South cooperation could expand into those areas.

Chapter IV

Report of the Working Group

54. The Committee considered agenda item 8 at its 5th meeting, on 4 June.
55. A Vice-President of the Committee, who served as the Chair-cum-Rapporteur of the Working Group, introduced the report of the Working Group.
56. The Committee adopted the report of the Working Group.

Chapter V

Provisional agenda of the twenty-first session of the Committee

57. The Committee considered agenda item 9 at its 5th meeting, on 4 June.

58. The Committee approved the provisional agenda of its twenty-first session (see chap. I, decision 20/2) and, by the same decision, authorized its President to consult with the representatives of Member States on the thematic discussion for the twenty-first session and to communicate the decision taken on the basis of those consultations with Member States in advance of the twenty-first session in order to enable delegations to take appropriate preparatory actions.

Chapter VI

Other matters

59. The Committee did not consider any issues under agenda item 10 at its 5th meeting, on 4 June.

Chapter VII

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its twentieth session

60. The Committee considered agenda item 11 at its 5th meeting, on 4 June.
61. The Rapporteur, Hashimu Gusau Abubakar (Nigeria), introduced the draft report of the Committee.
62. The Committee adopted the draft report and entrusted the Rapporteur with its completion.

Chapter VIII

Closure of the session

63. At its 5th meeting, on 4 June, a closing statement was made by the Assistant Administrator of UNDP and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support on behalf of its Administrator and Associate Administrator.

64. At the same meeting, the Director a.i. of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation also made a closing statement.

65. Also at the same meeting, the representative of Guinea made a statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The President of the Committee also made a statement and closed the session.

Chapter IX

Organizational matters

A. Date and place of the session

66. The High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation held its twentieth session at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 4 June 2021. The Committee held five meetings. It held an organizational meeting on 11 May 2021.

67. The establishment, background, history, chronology and reports on the work of the previous sessions of the Committee are contained in the reports of the Committee to the General Assembly.²

68. In accordance with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution [35/202](#), the session was convened by the Administrator of UNDP under the usual procedural arrangements.

B. Attendance

69. The twentieth session of the Committee was attended by representatives of States Members of the United Nations; funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system; intergovernmental organizations; non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities; and individuals invited to participate as panellists. The list of participants is contained in annex I to the present report.

C. Election of officers

70. The Committee elected its officers by acclamation, as follows:

President:

María del Carmen Squeff (Argentina)

Vice-Presidents:

Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani (Qatar)

Dalia Šalkauskienė (Lithuania)

Afonso Lages (Portugal)

Rapporteur:

Hashimu Gusau Abubakar (Nigeria)

71. The Committee approved the President's recommendation that Ms. Šalkauskienė serve as Chair of the Working Group. It was subsequently agreed that the Chair should also serve as Rapporteur of the Working Group.

D. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

72. The Committee held its organizational meeting in New York on 11 May 2021 to elect the Bureau of the twentieth session and to adopt the provisional agenda and programme of work.

73. The Committee adopted the provisional annotated agenda ([SSC/20/L.2](#)) and organization of work ([SSC/20/L.3](#)) for its twentieth session. A general debate on items 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 was held in plenary session on 1 and 2 June 2021. A thematic

² [A/35/39](#), [A/35/39/Corr.1](#), [A/36/39](#), [A/38/39](#), [A/40/39](#), [A/42/39](#), [A/44/39](#), [A/46/39](#), [A/48/39](#), [A/50/39](#), [A/52/39](#), [A/54/39](#), [A/56/39](#), [A/58/39](#), [A/60/39](#), [A/62/39](#), [A/65/39](#), [A/67/39](#), [A/69/39](#) and [A/71/39](#).

discussion, agenda item 6, was held on the afternoon of 2 June. The Working Group, scheduled to begin its work on 3 June, was assigned agenda items 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 for substantive discussion and charged with making recommendations to the Committee. The list of documents before the Committee at its twentieth session is contained in annex II to the present report.

Annex I

List of participants at the twentieth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation

States Members of the United Nations

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia (the), Germany, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Japan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Zambia

United Nations bodies and funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
 Economic Commission for Europe
 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Department of Economic and Social Affairs
 Development Coordination Office
 Office of Counter-Terrorism
 Peacebuilding Support Office

International Trade Centre
 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

United Nations Children's Fund
 United Nations Development Programme
 United Nations Population Fund
 United Nations Volunteers
 World Food Programme

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
 International Fund for Agricultural Development
 International Labour Organization
 International Maritime Organization
 International Telecommunication Union
 Pan American Health Organization
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
 United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 Universal Postal Union
 World Health Organization
 World Intellectual Property Organization

Intergovernmental organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent offices at Headquarters

European Commission
European Union
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Partners in Population and Development
South Centre

Intergovernmental organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly but not maintaining permanent offices at Headquarters

Islamic Development Bank Group

Non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities

Federación Mexicana de Universitarias
Fund for International Development of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
Fundación Argentina a las Naciones Camino a la Verdad
Fundación Pro Humanae Vitae
German Agency for International Cooperation
Institute for Sustainable Development and Research
Research and Information System for Developing Countries
Saudi Green Building Forum
South Asian Forum for Environment
The Reality of Aid Africa Network

Individuals invited to participate as panellists

A.K. Abdul Momen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh
Mantas Adomėnas, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania
Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization
Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive, South African Institute of International Affairs

Annex II

List of documents before the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation at its twentieth session

Provisional annotated agenda and list of documents ([SSC/20/L.2](#))

Note by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme on the adoption of the agenda and organization of work ([SSC/20/L.3](#))

Review of progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the new directions strategy for South-South cooperation and the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation ([SSC/20/1](#))

Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in implementing decision 19/1 of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, with emphasis on enhancing the role and impact of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, and in implementing the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation ([SSC/20/2](#))

Report of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation ([A/CONF.235/6](#))

Audit of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation: follow-up of Office of Audit and Investigations report No. 1580 dated 24 February 2016 (Updated: 2 May 2016). Report No. 1754. Issuance date: 22 February 2017¹

Audit of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. Report No. 2214. Issuance date: 11 December 2020²

United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024 (for information only)³

¹ See https://audit-public-disclosure.undp.org/view_audit_rpt_2.cfm?audit_id=1754.

² See https://audit-public-disclosure.undp.org/view_audit_rpt_2.cfm?audit_id=2214.

³ See www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/United-Nations-system-wide-strategy-on-South-South-and-triangular-cooperation-for-sustainable-development-2020-2024.pdf.

